

**Draft Minutes of the  
EPA/State Quality Assurance Roundtable Meeting  
EPA Laboratory N. Chelmsford, MA  
October 13, 2016**

**Meeting Host:** Vincent Perelli, NH DES

**Minutes:** Jean Nicolai, VT DEC

**1. Welcome & Introductions:**

Vince welcomed everyone and meeting attendees entered their information on the sign-in sheet. Participants around the table took turns introducing themselves. A list of the meeting attendees is below.

**Attendees:**

Vince Perelli, NH DES  
Brandon Kernen, NH DES  
Gary Waldeck, MA DEP  
Deneen Simpson, MA DEP  
Kevin Martin, ME DEP  
Andrew Johnson, ME DEP  
Nicole Lugli, CT DEEP  
Rose Ann Garry, NY DEC  
Jean Nicolai, VT DEC  
Evelyn Powers, NEIWPCC-IEC  
Mike Jennings, NEIWPCC  
Steve DiMattei, EPA

Nora Conlon, EPA  
Bryan Hogan, EPA  
Joanna Hunter, EPA  
Ann Jefferies, EPA  
Vicki Maynard, EPA  
Anthony Pepe, EPA  
Rob Reinhart, EPA  
John Smaldone, EPA  
Pat Svetaka, EPA  
Leo Corben

**2. Technical Session – PFCs presentation Brandon Kernen, NH Manager of Hydrology and Conversation**

- Works with water systems, regulates well drillers, groundwater discharge, etc.
- Have a number of emerging contaminants in the state.
- Many thanks to Brandon for this informative and interesting presentation (The slides have been posted on the QA Roundtable SharePoint Site). Please email Steve DiMattei if you'd like a copy of the slides ([dimattei.steve@epa.gov](mailto:dimattei.steve@epa.gov))

**3. Agency Updates:**

**EPA Region 1:**

- Steve D. – transitioning in his role. Will be working more in the drinking water program replacing Ann J. Ann is mentoring Steve to be the DW Certification Officer. Steve will retain CT and RI as his states.
- Rob, Bryan, and Anthony - ME, NH, VT and MA doing well. EPA has had a busy summer doing field audits. Currently have a vacancy.
- Visited three tribes. Are delinquent with their QMPs. Conducted a QSA for NEWMOA for solid waste group.
- John S. – introduced Johanna Hunter who is currently on a detail as the acting Deputy Director at OEME. He also introduced Leo Corben who works in the QA Unit, ordering and scoring the Performance Evaluation (PE) samples as part of the Superfund Program. The federal government is being funded through a continuing resolution until December 9<sup>th</sup>. The QA Unit had a busy year and undertook an effort to get caught up on the QMPs in the region. They have approved 10 QMPs since April. They had the Region 1 QMP approved by Headquarters. National QA office - OEI is transitioning quality staff and has undergone a re-organization.

- Nora C. – working with team and continuing QAPP reviews as a major focus.

#### **NH DES:**

- Vince P. - Recent retirement and a QA position is currently vacant and under recruitment. Vince is currently covering the work for the position. NH doesn't budget for retirement payouts and keeps positions vacant as long as necessary.
- Budget is in good shape and filling vacant positions even though several retirements.
- Relies on QA self-audits. He reviews the self-audits and responds to QA managers.
- QMP update due in 2017
- Has underutilized the QA team and should delegate work to the team.
- Uses google drive to have a real time QAPP inventory and has a live QAPP inventory on the SharePoint site.

#### **MA DEP:**

- Deneen S. - Jay Naparstek has retired and at the moment unsure who will replace him. Wastewater has received grant. Watershed planning program is working with Citizen Monitoring groups and establishing framework for state review for monitoring QAPPs. Unable to hire staff, but may not affect QA team.

#### **NEIWPCC:**

- Mike J. – FY 17 Drafting annual report for FY16 and will submit this quarter. Reviewed and approved 35 QAPPs. Has an annual meeting at the end of this month to discuss QA awareness. Last QMP was approved March 2013 and is up for review and resubmittal in 2017. Will need to update org chart due to a tremendous number of people joining the organization over the last three years.
- Downsized their office program (NY, NJ). Have six QAPPs for projects which are new or have been recently updated.

#### **ME DEP:**

- Andy J. - Leslie Anderson left at the end of August. Her replacement has been getting up to speed and have had changing person in the role of QA. Are discussing designating someone as a deputy QA Manager.
- Kevin Martin has been designated Deputy QA Manager. The QMP is due to be renewed and updated. Focus is on the SOPs attached to the QMP. Quality Management Steering Committee had shift in representation and meetings are being held quarterly. Also trying to include audits of environmental programs and also involve program reviews to determine if program is serving the original purpose. Developing SOPs for this work.
- Has been more agency (internal QAPPs) that need reviewing.
- Budget has been better, however need permission to fill most vacancies.

#### **CT DEEP:**

- Nicole L. - have a QMP approved and in place through 2018. Roslyn Reeps who worked for Nicole as the QA Coordinator, has moved to Washington State. Nicole is meeting with Bureaus to ensure they are on track with quality issues. CT is in a tough place with their budget. All of state agencies in CT have had layoffs. DEEP is committed to not imposing layoffs.

#### **NYS DEC:**

- RoseAnn G. – Had an EPA audit and are on target moving forward. Similar to other states regarding their budget, retirements, and the filling of vacant positions.

#### **RI DEM:**

- Steve D. provided an update for RI. Andy Manca left RI and Steve has been working with new folks to update their QMP. RI is working to get back on track since Andy left and have momentum and Rich Enander (RI DEM) expects that he will join us on the next conference call.

#### **VT DEC:**

- Jean N. - QSA in December 2015 and updated QMP in September 2016.
- PFOA contamination has consumed our sites team, leadership and legal staff.
- Budget is in good shape and currently able to recruit vacant positions.

#### **LUNCH BREAK**

#### **4. Information Sharing/Best Practices:**

- Conducting Self-Assessments(All)
  - NH - Core of QA system in NH is annual self-audit process. NH has been doing self-assessments for 15 years and currently reviews 70-80 programs. NH will share the information as requested. They use "Form A" and strive for an 80-90% compliance. Includes any program which manages environmental data. Has an SOP in place and a tracking sheet to manage self-audits. Mature programs which have 6 consecutive years of activity/good compliance, are put on a biannual audit cycle. Program is recognized for having a master program QAPP.
  - RI – mimicked NH's self-assessment system. Has two versions of the form – short and long form. Nora reviewed their self-assessment forms, and found the same issue reported two years in a row, so these forms only work if somebody is responsible for ensuring corrective action. The annual self-assessment engages the program to take a look at their quality system. Used to have a few question annually for QA folks such as do you have SOPS, do your programs have QAPPs in place?
  - VT-Evaluated using a simplified form A (NH). QA program folks felt the form did not add value, particularly the Air Program. VT will take the approach the Quality Assurance Manager will use NH's Form A as a guideline to check-in with programs annually when asking programs to report on status of QAPPs.
  - EPA reiterated states have flexibility on the universe of which programs are reviewed/pursued annually. The minimum programs reviewed are described in the QMP. Annually, the review may not necessarily encompass all programs.
  - CT – priority would be the programs who have the QAPPs and likes the idea of using a short form to assess the status.
  - ME – conducts second party audits for the department. Have an audit team and trained several folks to be auditors but have not retrained or trained anyone new. At one time were conducting 3-4 audits annually for programs collecting environmental data/processes. Also, they have audited their IT, and procurement processes in addition data collection. Audits usually lasts 2-4 days and the audit team consists of 2-4 members. Programs initially were not open to the process, but understood the value of the process in the end. Following the audit, the programs draft a plan to address any non-

conformities. Have not had a lot of consistency with the QA program manager role, so have recently only conducted a few audits. Also, they collate the QAPP list annually at the end of the year.

- MA – has 3 QA managers who handle self-assessments in their bureaus. They have some issues with consistency across bureaus, mainly issues around having current/updated QAPPs. Now have a process to verify QAPP review/updating. Gary W. (Brownfields Manager) – do their own self audits/assessment. Have site specific projects that last a short period. Interviews all staff involved in the QA projects to understand everyone's role, findings and they make recommendations to the Commissioner. If any findings affect the QMP, then the QMP is updated.
- NEIWPCC – has a process which is project specific and use a form similar to Form A. Annual questions typically include: do you have a plan, has it changed, has anything impacted data quality, etc. Compliance rate is low, but has a process in place as part of their QMP. Also, includes a few questions in staff annual performance reviews which evaluates staff knowledge and helps to identify any staff training needs.
- Using SharePoint - Rob Reinhart, EPA
  - Access check-in – have people been on it and are there any issues? A few are using the site.
  - States' QAPP inventory lists
  - Can share and review documents that would be useful to the group
  - Will include a calendar, meeting minutes, agenda for next meeting, etc.
  - Rob will send the invite to the SP site to those who made a request
  - Recommend folks who want access work with Rob to gain access.
- Citizen Science Updates - Nora Conlon and Bryan Hogan
  - Nora attended meeting at Tufts in June. Citizen Science (formerly known as Volunteer Monitoring). People would like access to data immediately – we have the tools to share. Several different types of organizations who use Citizen Science. When you collect data how can it be used? EPA in general is exploring more and better ways to help people plan their projects.
  - MassBays Summit – bringing water groups together and how to store and share their data. Try to find ways that are helpful for the Citizen Science groups. EPA will accept data if it meets the QA hurdle. QAPPs are required if monitoring is federally funded.
  - If EPA could set up criteria for data and required information that would be helpful. Watershed groups want the states to accept their data to show their watersheds are impaired. Each of the states have programmatic QAPPs which are used as the sampling portion for the volunteers and therefore, the structure is provided by the state. How do we bring in work citizens do on their own? What are the impediments?
  - States may use the data only as a screening tool vs accepting all data/making decisions based on the data. EPA/states could set parameters/criteria around when to record and report, such as blue green algae blooms.
  - A national advisory committee was formed to advise EPA in this area to have a more strategic approach. A report will be published in November. Unsure how the new administration will use the report. States also have river assessment programs.
  - Suggested more work to come in this area – will add topic on to future

meetings as appropriate.

- National Environmental Monitoring Conference - Vicki Maynard reported on:
  - Correlation coefficients
  - New procedure for MDLs in the proposed method update rule. New way of approaching MDLs.
  - Toxaphene – hot topic (should Toxaphene be looked at similar to congener analysis?)
  - Holding times – people take requirements and apply them to different programs.
  - Many sessions at the conference were related to Citizen Science. For example, in Louisville, DOH included a tracker in peoples' inhalers to track real-time inhaler use (smart inhalers).

#### **5. Training Needs:**

- Had a request to include QA training on the SharePoint (i.e. QA Awareness 101)
- How to draft and review a QAPP - EPA could bring the training to states if enough interest.
- Action item: Folks check in with programs and add training needs to SharePoint site

#### **6. Plans for Next Meeting & Future Agenda Topics:**

- Next conference call is scheduled for Thursday April 13, 2017 9-11 am
- Additional follow-up on Citizen Science
- Update on SharePoint
- Update on training opportunities
- State check-ins

The meeting was adjourned at 3:00 PM.